

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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O 211147Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2439

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 DAMASCUS 225

EXDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS -- TAGS: OREP (PERCY, CHARLES)

SUBJ: VISIT OF SENATOR PERCY TO SYRIA

1. SUMMARY: SENATOR PERCY COMPLETED SUCCESSFUL TWO-DAY VISIT TO SYRIA JANUARY 20 WHICH INCLUDED TOUR OF KUNEITRA AND PRIVATE TALKS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM AND SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASAD. MEDIA COVERAGE OF VISIT WAS HIGH. SENATOR GAVE EFFECTIVE SUPPORT TO CURRENT US DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS IN MIDDLE EAST AND MADE EXCELLENT IMPRESSION ON HIS SYRIAN CONTACTS. END SUMMARY

2. SENATOR PERCY DEPARTED DAMASCUS MORNING JANUARY 20 ENDING SUCCESSFUL TWO-DAY VISIT TO SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC. HE RECEIVED WARM WELCOME AND DESPITE SHORT TIME AVAILABLE WAS ABLE TO MEET WITH RANKING SYRIAN OFFICIALS. PRESIDENT ASAD CANCELLED HIS EVENING SHCHEDULE TO MEET WITH SENATOR FOR NEARLY TWO HOURS. FONMIN KHADDAM HAD EARLIER MET WITH HIM FOR JUST UNDER THREE HOURS. SENATOR WAS MET AT LEBANESE BORDER BY CHAIRMAN OF FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE OF SYRIAN PEOPLES' COUNCIL AND UPON HIS DEPARTURE WAS ESCORTED TO JORDANIAN BORDER BY PRESIDENT ASAD'S PRIVATE SECRETARY AND OFFICIALS OF THE SYRIAN PEOPLES' COUNCIL.

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3. AT AMBASSADOR'S DINNER JANUARY 18 SENATOR DISCUSSED AREA PROBLEMS AND BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH MINISTER OF ECONPY AND FOREIGN TRADE AL-IMADI, POLITICAL ADVISOR TO PRESIDENT ASAD, ADIB DAOUDI AND CHIEF, AMERICAN SECTION, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AL-SHUF. SYRIANS EMPHASIZED HOW IMPORTANT IT WAS FOR U.S. TO CONTINUE ITS EFFORTS FOR PEACEFUL SOLUTION AND THAT SETTLEMENT HAD TO INCLUDE BOTH RETURN OF ALL TERRITORIES OCCUPIED IN 1967 AND JUST SETTLEMENT FOR PALESTINIANS. ON LATTER POINT IT CLEAR THEY THINKING OF PALESTINIAN STATE RESTRICTED TOHWEST BANK/GAZA. TO QUESTION BY SENATOR THEY ADDED THAT ISRAEL SHOULD NOT BE ALARMED ABOUT THIS PROSPECT AS NEW PALESTINIAN STATE WOULD HAVE INTEREST IN ITS OWN SURVIVAL AND WOULD CERTAINLY SHED EXTERMIST TRAPPINGS OF CURRENT PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT. SENATOR SAID HE HAD BEEN IMPRESSED THAT, THROUGHOUT MIDDLE EAST, ARABS WERE COMMITTED TO REACHING PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM. HE WAS VERY HAPPY TO DISCOVER HOW WIDESPREAD WAS FEELING THAT ISRAEL AS STATE HAD RIGHT TO CONTINUED AND SECURE EXISTENCE. HE STRESSED THAT JEWS HAD SUFFERED FOR CENTURIES WITH AUSCHWITZ AN INDELIBLE MEMORY FOR THE WORLD STATE WHICH THEY HAD FOUNDED WAS A FACT AND MUST BE RECOGNIZED AS SUCH BY ARAB STATES. HE ALSO OBSERVED THAT, IN HIS MIND, THE PEOPLE WHO SHOULD MOST UNDERSTAND FRUSTRATIONS AND DESIRES OF PALESTINIANS FOR THEIR OWN HOME ARE THE ISRAELIS.

4. SUNDAY, JANUARY 19, SENATOR AND PARTY SPENT MORNING AT FRONT LINE GOLAN HEIGHTS TOWN, KUNEITRA. THEY WERE ESCORTED BY GENERAL ADNAN TAYYARA, SENIOR DELEGATE TO ISRAELI-SYRIAN MIXED ARMISTICE COMMISSION AND SARG LIAISON WITH UNTSO AND UNDOF. FOLLOWING TOUR OF CITY SENATOR AND PARTY MET WITH GOVERNOR OF KUNEITRA WHO DESCRIBED ISRAELI FINAL DESTRUCTION OF CITY JUST PRIOR TO ITS RETURN TO SYRIAN CONTROL IN JUNE 1974. SENATOR PERCY SAID HOW SAD SUCH DESTRUCTION MADE HIM FEEL AND URGED AGAIN CONCERTED EFFORTS BY ALL PARTIES TOWARD PEACEFUL SOLUTION OF ARAB-ISRAELI PROBLEMS TO INSURE THAT SUCH ACTS OF DESTRUCTION DO NOT REOCCUR. SENATOR SAID HE HOPED SYRIAN WOULD MOVE TO REBUILD CITY. IF SARG

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DESIRED US FUNDS FOR KUENITRA'S RECONSTRUCTION, HE STATED HE WOULD PERSONALLY WORK IN CONGRESS TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY FUNDS.

5. THAT AFTERNOON SENATOR SPENT NEARLY THREE HOURS WITH SYRIAN FONMIN ABD AL-HALIM KHADDAM. SENATOR STRESSED CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR SECRETARY'S MIDDLE EAST DIPLOMACY AND FOR FORD, ROCKEFELLER, KISSINGER TEAMWORK

DEALING WITH AREA PROBLEMS. SAID US CONGRESS AND AMERICAN PEOPLE DEEPLY DESIRED END OF MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT AND SUPPORTED POLICIES AIMED AT DIMINISHING INTRANSIGENCE ON ALL SIDES. THRUST OF KHADDAM'S PRESENTATION WAS THAT IT IS ISRAEL WHICH MUST GIVE ASSURANCES AT THIS JUNCTURE, NOT ARABS. FONMIN EXPLAINED THAT SYRIA WOULD NOT MAKE ANY "GIFTS" TO ISRAEL WITHOUT FIRST SEEING FULL WITHDRAWAL FROM TERRITORIES OCCUPIED IN 1967 AND SECURING CLEAR ARRANGEMENTS FOR RIGHTS OF PALESTINIAN RETURN TO FORMER HOMES WHEREVER THEY MIGHT BE: ON WEST BANK, GAZA AND TERRITORY ISRAEL CONTROLLED PRIOR 1967. MADE CLEAR SYRIA WILL BARGAIN HARD ON ALL FUTURE STEPS TOWARDS PEACE. THROUGHOUT REITERATED SYRIAN DESIRE FOR PEACE AND INTENTION PURSUE ROAD OF POLITICAL SOLUTION AS LONG AS POSSIBLE. ARGUED ISRAEL HAD FROM BEGINNING EXPLOITED US ARMS AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO PURSUE AGGRESSIVE EXPANSION-IST POLICIES AND NOT FOR SELF-DEFENSE.

6. SENATOR COUNTERED THAT EVEN ARAFAT HAD SINCE UNGA SPEECH QUALIFIED TALK OF UNITARY SECULAR PALESTINIAN STATE AS "DREAM". KHADDAM ACKNOWLEDGED HIS OWN POSITION MIGHT BE CONSIDERED HARDER THAN THAT OF OTHER ARAB SPOKESMEN WHOSE COUNTRIES LESS DIRECTLY INVOLVED. NONETHELESS ARGUED HIS WAS ARAB POSITION. KHADDAM CLEARLY ENJOYED SESSION WITH PERCY. HE URGED THEIR DIALOGUE CONTINUE AT LATER DATE AFTER SENATOR HAD VISITED ISRAEL.

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ACTION SS-25

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O 211147Z JAN 75

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2440

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS

7. THAT EVENING SENATOR AND MRS. PERCY INVITED BY PRESIDENT ASAD TO PRESIDENCY. CONVERSATION LASTING ALMOST TWO HOURS WAS WARM AND FRIENDLY. PRESIDENT REITERATED HIS COMMITMENT TO SEEK PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO ARAB CONFRONTATION WITH ISRAEL BUT STRESSED DEEP CONCERN THAT PACE OF DIPLOMATIC MOVEMENT HAS DANGEROUSLY SLOWED. AS HE HAD IN HIS OTHER MEETINGS, PERCY STRESSED US PLEASURE THAT ARAB OIL STATES WERE INVESTING IN EGYPT AND SYRIA AS WELL AS OUR DESIRE TO CONTRIBUTE TECHNOLOGY AND SHARE GENERALLY IN ASSISTANCE TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF AREA. NOTED USG PLANS INITIATE BILATERAL ASSISTANCE. SENATOR SAID HIS DEEP HOPE WAS THAT ARAB LEADERS SUCH AS ASAD WHO HAVE WORKED FOR INCREASED UNITY AND UNDERSTANDING WITH ARAB BROTHERS WILL EXTEND THEIR EFFORTS TO WHOLE REGION INCLUDING ISRAEL. ASAD COMMENTED, "WAR IS NOT OUR HOBBY. I DO NOT WANT EITHER OUR CHILDREN OR THOSE OF OTHERS TO DIE BUT WHEN WE FIND ALL ROADS CLOSED BEFORE US THEN, LIKE EVERYONE ELSE IN THIS WORLD, WE WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO FIGHT." ASSERTED GOI PRESENT POSITIONS DO NOT TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION LONG-RANGE INTERESTS OF ISRAELIS. PERCY SPOKE OF PRESENT UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR BREAK THROUGH TO PEACE, GIVEN DISPOSITION OF ALL PARTIES TO SEEK PEACE AND SECRETARY'S ACTIVITIES DEVOTED TO THIS GOAL. SENATOR'S MESSAGE TO
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ARABS AND ISRAELIS ALIKE, HE SAID, IS THAT WE DEPEND ON BOTH SIDES TO RESTRAIN ELEMENTS WHICH MIGHT BE TEMPTED USE FORCE TO BLOCK STEP-BY-STEP DIPLOMACY. PRESIDENT ENDED MEETING REITERATING CONVICTION THAT DIPLOMATIC MOVEMENT MUST BE FASTER AND THAT ANY FUTURE STEPS MUST BE TAKEN ON ALL FRONTS AND NOT SINGLE FRONT. CAUTIONED THERE MUST BE NO ATTEMPT TO DIVIDE THE ARAB COUNTRIES.

8. SYRIAN MEDIA HAS GIVEN PERCY VISIT PROMINENT COVERAGE. DAMASCUS DAILY, AL-THAWRA, JANUARY 20, PRINTED FOUR SEPARATE ITEMS INCLUDING PICTURES OF PERCY WITH ASAD AND KHADDAM. SYRIAN TV TAPED PERCY'S CALL ON ASAD AND FEATURED IT PROMINENTLY IN ITS NEWSCASTS. SENATOR'S FAVORABLE COMMENTS RE ASAD TO JORDANIAN MEDIA WERE FRONTPAGED IN SYRIAN PRESS JANUARY 21.

9. COMMENT: SENATOR PERCY'S VISIT TO SYRIA WAS SIGNIFICANT ASSIST IN EXPANDING CONTACT BETWEEN SARG AND USG. SENATOR IS LUCID AND ELEGANT ADVOCATE OF AMERICA'S DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS IN MIDDLE EAST AND HIS WORDS COMING FROM LEADING MEMBER US SENATE IMPRESSED SYRIANS. WE BELIEVE, IN TURN, SENATOR ACHIEVED STATED PURPOSE OF HIS VISIT IN THAT HE DID HEAR

FROM HIGHEST SYRIAN OFFICIALS THEIR POSITION ON CURRENT
MID-EAST SITUATION AND DIRECTIONS IN WHICH THEY HOPE
DEVELOPMENTS WILL GO. SENATOR'S RECEPTION INDICATES
EAGERNESS OF SYRIAN AUTHORITIES TO BROADEN THEIR CONTACTS
WITH INFLUENTIAL AMERICANS.
MURPHY

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